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AUTHOR	Roberts, Lynn
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ABSTRACT

This report describes how the Parent Services Project (PSP) is being implemented in the communities of Bushwick and Washington Heights/Inwood in New York City, focusing on the progress made and the challenges encountered in the first 18 months of the program's implementation. Information for the report was obtained through on-site observations as well as informal conversations, interviews, and focus groups conducted with parents and child care staff involved in the two sites. The following key themes generated by the data are highlighted: (1) staff and parents embraced the PSP philosophy of family engagement and community empowerment; (2) PSP activities were determined by the parents themselves, including deciding how program funds were to be spent; (3) PSP benefited parents by increasing social support, by providing opportunities to improve their parenting skills, by increasing access to community services, and by addressing language barriers that affect participation in centers and community life; (4) PSP staff sought to engage fathers and desired more male involvement in the program; (5) staff were committed to building coalitions while recognizing that doing so was a tremendous challenge and a slow process; (6) parents wanted more computer training and job preparation services from the program; and (7) barriers to PSP implementation included coordination of activities across sites, the timeliness of resource dissemination, and organizational turf issues. The report also details program evaluation for which staff indicated they would like information, including changes in parenting styles, impact on children, changes in the community, how well the coalitions work, and impact on fathers. The report concludes with a discussion of the logistical issues in conducting the evaluation. The interview and focus group questions are appended. (KB)

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A Developmental Evaluation of the Parent Services Project in Two New York Communities: Bushwick and Washington Heights

Prepared by

Lynn Roberts, PhD
Evaluation Consultant

Submitted to

Parent Services Project, Inc.
79 Belvedere Street, Suite 101
San Rafael , CA 94901

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Overview

This report describes how the Parent Services Project (PSP) is being implemented in the communities of Bushwick and Washington Heights/Inwood in New York City. The format of this report is a summary of the impressions that this evaluator has gleaned through on-site observations, interviews and focus groups held with parents and staff involved in the two sites. This evaluation does not profess to indicate the successes or failures of the New York-based PSP, but rather, highlights the progress made and challenges that have been encountered within the first 18 months of project implementation. The evaluation process utilized has been developmental in nature. Just as the PSP activities were shaped by the participants in each community, the evaluation process and methods were determined and adapted to meet the needs of program participants. All of the findings in this report were generated by the participants involved in the PSP project. As much as possible, the evaluator has attempted to have the participants speak for themselves and in their own voices. It is hoped that this report will serve as the basis for continuing dialogue between funders, staff and parents to realize the greatest potential of the PSP and to inform future evaluation efforts.

Gathering the data. The primary informants for this report were the PSP Coordinators in Bushwick (Barbara Utendahl) and Washington Heights/Inwood (Roxanna Medina). Both coordinators allowed the evaluator to hang out with them for several hours between September 1999 and September 2000 in order to learn more about the PSP sites. They also arranged for the evaluator to meet and interview staff and parents at several (but not all) centers involved in the project. Given the resources available and several scheduling conflicts, it was not feasible to visit all of the day care centers and Head Start program sites involved in the PSP during this phase of the evaluation. Our purpose was not to evaluate individual centers, thus, the PSP Coordinators served as the primary unit of analysis representing the two communities.

Informal conversations with parents, staff and children were held in both sites throughout the data collection period. Activities observed included tours of centers, parent meetings, and classroom visits. The formal data collection involved face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Both PSP coordinators were interviewed to determine their vision of PSP as well as their accomplishments and challenges. In addition to the PSP Coordinators, four staff from participating centers (2 in Bushwick and 2 in Washington Heights/Inwood) were interviewed to determine their impressions of the PSP programs. Five parents were interviewed (2 in Bushwick and 3 in Washington Heights) and six parents were interviewed in two focus groups held in Washington Heights to determine their involvement in PSP activities and the benefits derived from their participation. Three of the focus group parents were highly involved in PSP activities and three of the focus group parents had low levels of PSP involvement. All of the interviews and focus groups were conducted in English by the evaluator. Three of the interviews and both focus groups also required the assistance of a Spanish language translator. All interviews and focus groups were tape-recorded and transcribed. The interview and focus group guides are included in Appendix 1. The key themes generated by these data sources are described below. Names are excluded to protect the confidentiality of respondents.

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Staff and parents embrace PSP philosophy. Whereas, the PSP Coordinators, staff and parents had slightly different impressions of the primary purpose of PSP, they overwhelmingly embraced its philosophy of family engagement and community empowerment. Some of the staff who responded had participated in the PSP trainings held in September 1998. Parents who were actively involved in PSP activities had a clearer sense of the program philosophy than parents who were less active.

> *The PSP is a project which brings together the families and it advocates for the families. Not only that, but it brings the families together in activities and not only the families together, but also the community together in activities . . . and not only that, it broadens their activities outside of the community also. It brings them together. Many of our families are isolated and this is an opportunity for them to relate to others, other cultures. . . .*
> (Head Start Family Service /Social Service Coordinator, Washington Heights)

PSP means parents! (Head Start Assistant Director, Bushwick)

> *[M]y vision of PSP would be for the community to begin to work together to form a better community and more partnerships in the community. Being able to use the resources as they were intended. Whereas, the only reason something would be running twice is because there is not enough space not because nobody knows what the next person is doing. So, more of a collaborative type relationship with all of the businesses, as well as all the parents in the community. That's what I would like to see. That's my vision.*
> (PSP Coordinator, Bushwick)

I feel that we empower the parents to be better individuals and as they become better individuals, they become better parents. They open up the doors to communication with their children. There have been so many positive stories coming out of the parents within a space of two to three weeks. They've implemented something that they learned at a workshop. It's been a very positive thing for most of the sites. And I see it growing and I think that if I can touch at least ten parents at each site, something positive is being done and not just because it's me, but because it's what the program provides the parents. They have the tools there to work.
(PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

> *In my view, it is to . . . get the family . . . it's like a family involvement OK? To my view, it's like for a parent to do more with their children. To take their children out to museums, parks, and . . . who otherwise couldn't take them. Or would take them or don't know about taking them. And also enlighten the parent of other things that are happening within the community. The workshops that are set up for them are really good for the whole family. It's like family orientated (sic).*
> (Head Start Family Assistant, Washington Heights)

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It's a wonderful program. Because it gives parents opportunities that they can do with their kids. What they can do with their kids, they give opportunity because you don't have to pay anything, for one. It's such places that where you can go – where you and your kids can have fun together. That's what I love about it.
(Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

> *This program . . . I cannot describe . . . it's like an oasis in the middle of the desert. This, for me, this is like a sanctuary. 'Cause in here . . . even though the community doesn't know the kinds of services that they provide, when I just started participating in the program, it's wonderful. Social services that they provide here for the families, for the children, are really great and I'm so glad. You know, I am so fortunate that I have the opportunity to participate in the program with my child.*
> (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

We help out. You know, cause it's our kids that are involved in it. It's only right that we are, as parents, we participate with them. They know that us, too, are interested in what they are doing.
(Head Start Parent, Bushwick)

PSP activities are determined by the parents themselves. In both sites, the parents are involved in deciding how program funds will be spent. PSP Coordinators utilize a democratic process by holding monthly meetings with parents and soliciting parent suggestions both orally and in writing.

[T]he Coordinator, . . . she comes in once a month with a meeting and she lets us know what we can plan for . . .the funds that are available . . . . I like the fact also that parents can know what's happening in the program. . . . She lets us know what we could do to make it better. How could we go about raising money for anything.
(Head Start Parent, Bushwick)

> *It's really more about tapping into the need of the parent. Finding out what it is that they want to learn and that they want to do. And for a while, we really focused more on workshops. But, then the parents were like, I've been in this country ten, fifteen years and I've never been here, never been there. And so I looked into the menu and I was like, "Hey, this is something that we can do". We can actually take a trip and go to see the museum that these parents have never been here. And I know that the PSP program is for parents to do activities for the parents, with the parents without the children, but the parents in this community are very involved with their children. I have had to adjust. The parents want to have activities with their children. So we go to the museum with our children, we go to Chelsea Piers on Halloween with our kids. We did have one trip where we went to see a show, a dance theatre company and that was a trip without our kids. Parents want to go to a shopping expedition in New Jersey – that' without the kids. So, it's what they want. I try to give them what they want and what they need.*
> (PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

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Nine times out of ten, I always go to the parents. I do, because they are my resource. They ARE my resource and they are always there to help me. . . . I sit back and listen. I just give them the opportunity to talk and to express themselves because they live in the community and they have more of an idea what they would like to see or how it used to be. (PSP Coordinator, Bushwick)

PSP benefits parents by increasing social support. Both staff and parents indicated that parents' participation in PSP activities decreased their social isolation by expanding their social networks, creating a sense of belonging, and providing a comfortable atmosphere in which they felt welcome and useful. PSP parents turn to each other for emotional support, for emergency child care, and for advice.

> *I was in my house all the time. I wanted to go to school or to be in any activity because I was feeling really sad and depressed. All the time in the kitchen. But, the center opened me. It was like an open window. I'm telling you. It was something beautiful because I received a lot of orientation to the program as a mother, as a woman, as a human being, and for me, it was great. Because, I finished school in my country and I didn't have the chance to be enrolled in educational activities and I have, you know, these feelings. I was feeling really good when I saw the potential and all the things that this center is offering.*
> (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

I feel better about myself. Now, I'm actually participating before I just used to bring him. I didn't know nothing. And now, everything's better because the school made me feel comfortable, wanted. They made me feel that they needed me and that was nice. It made me change a whole lot. I'm a better mother!
(Head Start Parent, Bushwick)

> *[M]ost of the friends that I have now is because I met them here. I really don't have too many friends and they are real nice people. Because we got the kids to talk about and we have that in common.*
> (Head Start Parent, Bushwick)

I have a lot of friends because we had the opportunity to go on trips. We have the committees. I belong to the education committee. Sometimes when I have time, I come to the other groups, like the health group. With classes, like nutrition. And I met a lot of people. I met a lot of friends. And still we are friends. We talk. We exchange ideas and that's wonderful. We're like a family.
(Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

> *They felt more comfortable knowing that they are important. You know, don't let their husbands and friends keep them down and let them know how to keep themselves looking beautiful and let him help take care of the children while they go out and just relax themselves.*
> (Day Care Director, Washington Heights)

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If she's not able to bring her son in and she's around my way, she'll be like "would you please take my son in?" I'll go "alright". We look out for each other like that. . . . If I can't, or if you can't find anybody else, we call each other. It's only right. We're friends and know each other, we care for each other's kids. That's a little part of us.
(Head Start Parent, Bushwick)

PSP benefits families by providing opportunities to improve their parenting skills. In the workshops and meetings, parents interacted with invited speakers and with other parents. In these settings, parents were able to process new information and practice new skills as parents. The PSP Coordinator also provided parenting advice to parents. Parents developed insight about their children and learned more effective ways to support their children's healthy development.

> *It's good to hear everybody's point of view. And we'll be like "hmmm, that one sounds better! I didn't think of that". Because it happened to them before.*
> (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

It made me a way better person. Definitely, because now, I have . . . I could see my son as M___ R____. Not just as that's just my son. Because I noticed that . . . I just moved six months ago to this new apartment and in the old apartment it was always dark. I really didn't pay no mind to my son as much as I wanted to because I was depressed. He wasn't in this program, just yet. Not only is he here, but I feel much better, my apartment is beautiful and bright.
(Head Start Parent, Bushwick)

> *She learned through one of the workshops . . . how to better communicate with her child. She learned to discipline him and how to speak to him. Instead of telling him what to do, she asked him. Certain things . . . she helped him overcome his fears. Her husband will physically discipline the child . . . she will intervene. "No, you can't do that" "You need to do this, or do that" She tries to balance out stuff at home. . . . She was coming into the classroom an hour or hour and a half and she would see how the teachers disciplined the children. All those things aided her in becoming a better parent.*
> (PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

I had my first child when I was 20 and everybody was telling me "You're supposed to do this and supposed to do that". The only way you learn is to go to the workshop, hear what other people do and try to do your best.
(Day Care Parent, Washington Heights)

PSP increases access to community services. Parents who participate in PSP were able to access services in their community and to become better advocates for their children. Parents often receive referrals from social service staff, but when representatives of agencies visit the centers, the parents have an opportunity put faces with names and to ask questions within the safety of the group. This builds both a sense of entitlement to services and a sense of community.

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The person that came from the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center gave us a telephone number for any extra help or any questions that arise in a moment when we are in the house and there isn't anybody available. He was willing to answer it over the telephone. And the most important was that sometimes we owe money in the library because sometimes we run out of time for going. So, for instance, I had an account over there like $35 because of my kids. They are asthmatics and they got sick. And I was by myself. And then when the lady came she gave me her name and when I went to the library I was asking for the person in charge and they said you owe this money and this and that. And then the lady, gave me a period of grace and she told me call me and when I came . . . And then I got the privilege of getting the library card without paying the fee. And the one with the police with the 34th precinct, the cops. That one was wonderful. Because these workshops put the community in contact with the police department. Sometimes we see the police on the street and we think that they don't have feelings that they are our enemies just like that. But, when we come and we shared in the workshops, we realize that they are people with feelings, they are people with problems, that they have kids with asthma, that they are not millionaires, that they are doing very dangerous job out there to make a living like us and that together we can work better. If we make a team work, we're gonna, you know, the community is gonna be better. So it was wonderful. . . . You learn from mothers and you learn from those who come to provide the workshops. . . . That's what happened to me . . . it was really useful. Because I was having a hard time in P.S. 152 and then they asked me questions that I was able to answer because I took the workshop. (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

PSP addresses language barriers that effect participation in centers and community life. In one of the two focus groups held with parents, each of the three respondents had lived in the community for 20 or more years, yet, none of them could communicate in English. ESL classes were previously offered at the site, but had to be discontinued when the instructor was no longer available during day time hours. Parents often served as translators for each other, allowing women to participate more fully in the centers and in community life. Having bi-lingual staff within the centers enhanced the level of participation of non-English speaking women. One PSP Coordinator conducted workshops and meetings in both English and Spanish. In contrast, when personal translation devices were distributed at one parent meeting, the parents did not appear to be comfortable using them. Recognizing and supporting both languages is important to parents.

When I met her a year ago, she didn't say diddly squat in English OK and she is defending herself in English. I am so proud of you. And you're trying . . . and you weren't doing that before. It makes me feel positive makes me feel good that you're doing for yourself. (PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

> *[T]he only thing that we're trying to work with is getting as much ESL as possible. I see that parents express the need for the English language, but a lot of them are scared and I think that's become a barrier. Again, working with the community, working with . . . we have people who are predominantly Hispanic*

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origin and they're always here. Whenever we need them, we can call them, you know, they're there for us. Parents are the best translators, though, I mean, there's always somebody that we can grab or that she can grab. My point is don't get discouraged. If you walk out of here because nobody understands you, I notice that parents come back with somebody that can translate. And that's my thing. That's what I like to see. The point is, I didn't discourage you by walking away simply because I didn't understand you. You had enough in you to come back with somebody because you want them to understand what's going on. And I like that. (PSP Coordinator, Bushwick)

I want my daughter to speak a little fluent in English. That's what I want for my daughter. 'Cause I talk to her at home in Spanish, but I want her to be fluent in English. That's what I want. (Day Care Parent, Washington Heights)

PSP seeks to engage fathers and would like to have more male involvement. The PSP Coordinators, staff and parents were very excited about having fathers participate in the center activities and to be more involved with their children. In one center, a father played a lead role, but more typically men were participants in special events and provided physical assistance on occasion. Reaching out to fathers on an individual basis proved very beneficial to mothers and to children.

Yes, we do have males here in the morning. Although, we do have a lot of fathers, in the afternoon, and they are very involved in their children's lives and they bring them in and they pick them up. They're the ones who get all the information in the classroom. They're the ones that get called if there's an emergency. And if we need their help, we ask them and they're always there. But, in the morning, we have a larger group. As a matter of fact, our chairperson was a male. And we were very proud of that. . . . The chairperson . . . usually women who participate get elected president or vice president. Last year, the chairperson was a male and so was the treasurer. This man was sent to meetings down town. It was good because he had his own little business so he had the time because he didn't have his time restricted to go from 8-4. So he had his own hours. He was always there for our meetings. It was excellent. We were like, wow. I think it was like the first time in the history of _____. And also we were pushing it 'cause it was when we actually started with PSP and they said we needed to have male figures there and they were pushing for fathers to be . . . . and we were successful. Now, this year we tried again but it was kind of hard. That's also what we got out of PSP. That's when we actually started getting training and they were telling us to have more male figures and we went on . . . and we actually got it! I remember Barbara calling me and telling me "Your father was here, today!" I go "Well, good!" I remember that. I was like "Yes, my father was there!" (laughter). (Head Start Asst. Director, Bushwick)

That's our biggest problem . . . the fathers, the fathers . . . 'cause you know sometimes the mothers and the fathers. We're trying. You know, we have a few fathers that help when we need something, you know, they help us with stuff. But, we're trying to get them. You know, the fathers are hard because they will tell us "I'm working!" "I gotta bring the money, I gotta pay the bills". But, some of

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them take time off because we have like Father's Day and each of the fathers came for that day and spent a little time to see what the kids are doing. It was wonderful. (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

I had another child who was very quiet and very clingy and the mother felt comfortable enough to tell me that there was a situation going on at home. I made it a point to reach out to the father of the child and get the father involved and now the child . . . he's doing wonderfully from what he was a year ago. I mean the child is very outgoing and he's social which, a year ago he wasn't. (PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

PSP staff are committed to building coalitions but recognize that it is a tremendous challenge and a slow process. The Bushwick site is attempting to make a broad-based community effort to make inroads into the public schools. The strategy that has proven effective for them has been to link with existing coalitions and agencies in the community who share the same goals. In Washington Heights, more emphasis has been placed on crossing cultural barriers through participation in multicultural community events and increasing opportunities for building personal relationships.

Bushwick hcs a separation part about it and so it's hard to know what one side is doing unless you have somebody bringing the information. I bring what I can, but some of it I don't get. Now that the parents are bringing it, they are able to bring some of that information over here, too. The stuff that I really don't get. That, to me, is an accomplishment. It kind of, . . . there's still more work, but it's baby steps. To me, that makes a big difference. And I know it makes a big difference for parents and families in the community because they're getting more out of their community and they are learning to advocate for what they want. So that's a lot of what I think is a big accomplishment. . . . There's a lot of discrimination. I would definitely say that. But, I see that in this community, they've been working for so many years to have things in place and remarkably enough, it's working. We're beginning to see a difference with bringing these two parts together. We also have a meeting once a month and we bring together the public schools. We have somebody from the Board of Education. We're all starting to work together and although they use me the most, I really don't mind because I want to see the community work and they're always coming to me – Well, can you fax this? How many sites do you have? – My job is to make sure all the sites get the information and that every site is invited. Because we are doing this Open House. But now we are working and trying to get into the public schools. I think that as long as I don't stop, because I've had doors shut in my face, too. (PSP Coordinator, Bushwick)

I work with Dominican,, Hispanics, predominantly Dominican and then there's Mexican and Puerto Rican and the Central and South Americans. And in one of my sites I also have a rather large African American population which I have not dealt with them on a professional basis in the past so I have a liaison at that site who works with me in order to better reach. Because I want to be able to reach. OK. I have one of the Mexican moms who is my liaison with them and even with the Dominican and Puerto Rican.

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because I think that . . . I don't want them to feel intimidated, I don't want them to feel uncomfortable. I work directly with the staff at the sites, you know, but still it's a challenge. You know, but that's still a challenge. There are personal things, there are petty things. But, it's a good challenge. It's something that I'm well, ok, I'm going to overcome this. (PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

Parents would like to see more computer training and job preparation services available. Women expressed strong desires to obtain computer training and other job training to prepare them to enter and advance in the labor force. Parents at every site visited stated that computer and job training were very important to them. Several parents saw the centers as the ideal location for vocational services. They wanted to be near their children and the supportive staff.

> *What I would suggest is that at the beginning, why the parents . . . you know, that bring the kinds . . . if some of them like, you know, to have computer classes – something for them. They have, you know, like a room where they can be enrolled in any activities that can serve them to be enrolled in the labor force.*
> (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

Computers . . . it helps the parents and then if the parents know the computers, it will help the children. (Day Care Parent, Washington Heights)

> *[A] computer class right on site where the parents will be able when they drop off their kids, they could go right to the parent room and . . . because the parents need to know at least a little bit about computers. So, I think that we should have computers on site for the parents.* (Head Start Parent, Washington Heights)

I would love for the parents to have a resource center where there's classes being offered at different hours to fit their schedule. And there's a very huge need for ESL, computer training, GED, vocational placing. (PSP Coordinator, Washington Heights)

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Barriers to PSP implementation include coordination of activities across sites, the timeliness of resource dissemination, and organizational "turf" issues.

> *There have been a lot of challenges. There are scheduling conflicts between sites. Directors that are overwhelmed with so much work that it's difficult to really coordinate a specific activity on a timely basis. Parent Involvement has been a big challenge and will continue to be a big challenge.*
> (PSP Coordinator)

I guess being able to deal and handle problems and when I say problems they're not really problems, they're just people take hold of certain things – or it's Head Start and this is how it's supposed to be. And it's not necessarily the Directors, it's the staff, as well. And the control. I guess it would be the control issue. My challenge is getting them to see that I don't want control, I want to work with you. Basically, it's been working, but it is still a challenge. It's difficult to kind of stand back and not do as much as you want or would like to do in fear of somebody thinking that you're trying to take responsibility for it. And so that's a challenge. I'm trying to break that barrier down a little. I'm not asking for the wall to come crumbling down, but if you're not giving me that fair share, you're not giving it to the families and the parents. You're holding onto things that they should have a part of and they should be a part of. So, that's a challenge for me. And keeping parents . . . keeping them from getting discouraged.
(PSP Coordinator)

> *What I feel that would be helpful . . . would be if, in some way, the funds, itself could be more accessible. Many times we want to – the parents even have said that they want to do certain things – a lot of times we requisition to get the money in place to do it with. Like a particular function that they want to have. It was . . . the show was no longer being offered. What happens with . . . like with some of the other sites, I think they have their funds more readily available. I don't know what can be done about that.* (Head Start Family Service/Social Service Coordinator, Bushwick)

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What Have We Learned and Where Do We Go From Here?

When the evaluator first met with PSP project staff in June 1999, she asked participants to respond to the following question: **If you were to pick up an evaluation report about your program a year from now, what would you want the report to tell you?** The responses to this query were very thoughtful. As was predicted, none of the questions posed could be adequately answered in this stage of the evaluation and several questions will require further investigation and reporting. What was learned about each question during this stage of the evaluation and the implications for future program and evaluations efforts are discussed below.

Question: **To what extent has PSP caused changes in parents as they relate to their children's behavior?**

In numerous accounts, parents and staff reported that the PSP has positively influenced how parents relate to their children. Whether these findings reflect the impact of PSP or the combined effects of the Head Start/Day Care programming and PSP is more difficult to distinguish. The best way to conduct such an evaluation in the future would be to compare PSP parents and children to parents and children in sites where PSP is not being implemented. It was originally proposed to select parents who experienced different levels of participation in the PSP activities. Unfortunately, we were not able to select and interview parents according to such a formula. As a result, a convenience sample was utilized which did not generate the variation in participation. Future evaluations could either compare parents in PSP with parents not exposed to PSP –OR- could partition parents according to their level of participation in the PSP at the end of the year. Face-to-face interviews or pen-and-paper surveys could be conducted with parents to illuminate any changes in parenting styles and behaviors within a fixed period of time (e.g., between six months and a year).

Questions: **What changes have happened with the children as a result of their parents being leaders?**

What types of leadership roles have parents assumed in relationship to education, access, etc.?

This evaluation did not directly assess the impact of PSP on children. That is to say, the children of parents who participated in PSP were not individually assessed to determine any changes in their level of emotional, cognitive or social functioning. Furthermore, this evaluation did not assess to what extent the parents identified themselves or were identified by others as leaders. However, several parents and staff reported that children and parents became more outgoing, more confident and more independent. As stated above, these observed changes could be a reflection of the PSP and/or the Head Start/Day Care programs. In order to adequately answer this question, it will be necessary to assess the impact of PSP on children as well as determine the parents' development of various leadership roles and skills. Standardized measures could be utilized and comparisons made according to the formula described above.

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Questions: **How has the community changed – politically, socially, economically, educationally – as a result of the PSP parents' increased participation in their communities?**

And how much will parents stay involved long after PSP?

How has the school district changed as a result of the PSP?

These very important questions were not addressed by this evaluation. Neither PSP program was at the stage of implementation to bring about major institutional or community change. Nonetheless, this evaluation could have done a better job of describing the interactions that took place between PSP parents and staff and other community agencies, school district representatives. Indeed, future evaluations should gather data from informants who are outside of PSP, but involved with PSP staff and parents. Only a longitudinal evaluation will allow us to determine parents' active involvement over time. The creation of a data base for keeping track of parents and children over time would need to be established. Without the benefit of computer technology, a card file for each family could be created and utilized to track parent participation in community and school activities over time. Either record keeping system would require PSP staff to maintain contact and relationships with parents after the youngest child ages out of the center.

Question: **How have the coalitions worked together, shared resources? How are staff involved? How has a parent leadership system been developed? How recognized is the group in the community/neighborhood?**

At this stage of program implementation and evaluation, these questions could not be adequately addressed. Whereas collaborative efforts have taken place in both sites, a formal coalition has yet to be established in either community. In Bushwick, the PSP has tapped into existing coalitions. In Washington Heights, several sites have shared in PSP activities. Future evaluations will need to describe with whom and in what ways PSP parents and staff collaborate with other agencies. As indicated above, it will be useful to have input directly from those individuals outside of PSP and the centers.

Questions: **How are fathers involved differently in their children's lives as a result of PSP? How well do/can we reach Latino fathers?**

Several mothers and staff reported that fathers were increasingly and more positively involved in their children's lives since implementation of PSP. Specific strategies for involving more fathers in PSP were not indicated by any of the evaluation respondents. It must also be noted that no fathers were interviewed by the evaluator. This may have been a reflection of their more limited involvement in PSP or the limitations of convenience sampling. Future evaluations would need to gather insights from fathers about their experiences with PSP and any barriers to their participation. Relying on mothers and female staff to report on the participation of fathers severely limited this

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evaluation. Male staff were glaringly absent from the sites visited. To reach Latino fathers, specifically, language and cultural barriers would need to be addressed. First and foremost, parents and staff would need to agree what type of father involvement they would like to see in the centers. It might be useful to determine whether fathers are welcomed as primary caregivers, as handymen, as co-parents, or as some combination thereof?

Questions: **How comfortable do families feel in the environment of the centers? How do we create and sustain that comfort level?**

In interviews and focus groups, parents indicated that they felt comfortable and welcome in the PSP program sites. This evaluation, however, did not elicit descriptive information about the specific characteristics of particular sites (and not all sites were visited) that made families feel comfortable. What types of parent space, staffing patterns, and staff qualities were more conducive to family involvement? In future evaluations, this level of detailed information would need to be obtained in a sensitive manner and findings could be used to make practical suggestions to different sites rather than serve merely as criticism.

A few thoughts on the logistics of the PSP evaluation. Future evaluation efforts will benefit from having an evaluation team as opposed to a single investigator. Having more evaluation personnel available to conduct multiple interviews across all of the centers would have provided a more comprehensive picture of how PSP is being implemented. It would also be helpful to have bi-lingual interviewers available. This evaluator only spoke English and a number of parents only spoke Spanish. Throughout the course of the evaluation process, communication occurred primarily between the evaluator and the PSP Coordinators. This was a strategy chosen by the evaluator to expedite her entry into the operational level of PSP. This approach provided immediate access to the parents. However, it did not facilitate implementation of the evaluation plan as originally proposed. For example, the evaluation results were heavily skewed by the convenience sampling of sites and parents and it was not possible to systematically assess parents' level of involvement in PSP activities. Better communication with the organizational leadership may have taken more time, but also may have facilitated more comprehensive support and participation in the evaluation.

This stage of the evaluation was also limited by several scheduling conflicts with PSP Coordinators and parents. Selecting convenient times to meet with parents proved difficult. Since the evaluator was not able to provide incentives for parents to participate in the evaluation, only highly motivated parents or parents who were available during the days and evenings when the evaluator visited could be interviewed. Interviewing parents during regularly scheduled PSP parent meetings was helpful, but also interfered with parent participation in those activities. Using less obtrusive measures such as observational check lists to be completed by evaluators or questionnaires that parents complete on their own and return to the site could be considered. However, language and literacy barriers may prohibit reliance on this latter approach.

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Summary

The findings contained in this report have provided just a small glimpse of all the activities, the triumphs and the challenges that have been the collective experiences of the participants in the PSP projects. As reflected in their comments, the PSP Coordinators in both communities have a strong commitment and vision for implementing this project. They have received tremendous support and encouragement from the directors and staff in the Head Start and Day Care centers involved. They have also been challenged by the slow allocation of funds, organizational issues within centers, and the overwhelming needs of the families served. They have identified, utilized and coordinated existing resources in their respective communities. Most importantly, they have created a comfortable environment for the parents in which to listen to them. The major challenges will be to continue to build upon the relationships that have been established within this past year and a half and to help parents individually and, as a community, to realize their vision for themselves and their children. Tackling major issues such as welfare reform, unemployment, and public education will not be possible without the community involvement that this project is seeking to create one parent at a time.

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Appendix I

Interview Questions for Parents

1. How long have you been coming to this day care center?
2. What do you like most about this day care center?
3. Are you familiar with the PSP program? If so, what is the PSP?
4. What types of activities do you participate in, as a parent, at this day care center?
5. What would make it easier for you to participate in parent activities at this day care center?
6. What other types of parent activities would you like to have available at this day care center?
7. Please describe your relationship with other parents in this day care center?
8. Who do you turn to for support in times of need?
9. How has participating in PSP activities benefited you?
10. How has your participation in PSP activities benefited your children?
11. Are there any other comments you would like to share?

Questions for PSP Coordinators

1. What is your vision of the PSP program?
2. How have you implemented this vision?
3. What do you consider your major accomplishments as a PSP Coordinator?
4. What challenges have you faced as a PSP Coordinator?
5. If resources were not a consideration, what would you like to do differently as PSP Coordinator?
6. What have you learned about this community since becoming PSP Coordinator?

Questions for Day Care Staff

1. What is your job title and what are your primary responsibilities?
2. In your view, what is the purpose of the PSP program?
3. In what ways do you think the PSP has benefited the children in this day care center?
4. In what ways do you think the PSP has benefited the parents in this day care center?
5. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the PSP?

Questions for Focus Group with Parents

1. As a parent, what do you want most for your child?
2. How important is this child care center in your child's development?
3. Describe some of your experiences in the PSP program. What activities do you enjoy the most? What activities do you enjoy the least?
4. What are your feelings about the community in which you live?
5. Who are the people in your community you turn to for support in time of need?
6. What does empowerment mean to you?
7. What have you learned about being a parent since participating in PSP?
8. What do you do differently, as a parent, since participating in PSP?
9. What do you do for yourself since participating in PSP?
10. What else would you like to talk about?

Note: A checklist of all activities provided during previous six months will be distributed to participants to determine their level of participation in PSP (or this will be determined by reviewing program records). A summary of this data will be included in the summary of focus group findings.

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Organization/Address: Hunter College Urban Public Health 425 E. 25th Street Box 766 New York NY 10010	Telephone: 212 481 5710 FAX: 212 481 5260
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